



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Young

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Informational Hearing - Suspension Practices of City Agency Supervisors

FOR the purpose of requesting the Director of Human Resources and all Baltimore City Department and Union Heads to brief the City Council regarding the current suspension practices within Baltimore City agencies, the different types of suspensions available for disciplining employees, the number of City employees suspended from each agency, and the impact that current suspension practices have on the City's workforce.

Recitals

According to the current Baltimore City Disciplinary policy, the purpose of disciplinary action is to improve employee work performance or correct unsatisfactory behavior. Section 350 of the Personnel Manual states that "Discipline requires identifying problem areas in an employee's work, redirecting the employee in proper procedures to follow, and occasionally, imposing punishment for repeated or serious offenses".

Under the current practices the primary emphasis of disciplinary action is corrective rather than punitive, and in most cases a simple oral reprimand should be deemed sufficient to change the employee's work behavior. Rules, policies and standards should be developed for similar employees and applied uniformly by supervisors. All similar cases should be treated alike.

Under Rule 350, supervisors are responsible for taking prompt disciplinary action against employees who break a rule or perform badly, but are not to be considered "problem employees" unless they are habitual or consistent offenders. There are 11 steps a supervisor should take prior to suspension of employees. These procedures require supervisors to:

1. Cool Off
2. Investigate
3. Seek Privacy
4. Concentrate on the Issue
5. Listen
6. Assume Responsibility
7. Recognize the effect on other employees

8. Explain what comes next
9. Repeat and Summarize
10. Prepare a written summary
11. Get outside help if necessary

Disciplinary actions include a range of responses to situations where the employee disobeyed the rules or did not follow orders. The first step is a reprimand. Whether written or oral, a reprimand states that the employee's work was incorrect or unsatisfactory and that the work needs improvement. The next step is a warning. The warning is a harsher form of notice than the reprimand and informs an employee that actions may be taken against them. Supervisors may also deny an employee privileges, such as withholding discretionary assignments or benefits pending an employee's improvement.

Supervisors may also suspend employees without pay. Suspension is an ordered absence from duty, without pay, to impose a financial penalty, and to emphasize good work and compliance with standards as a condition of continued employment. Suspension of classified Civil Service employees is limited to 30 calendar days, unless the employee is under investigation for criminal acts.

Although these policies are in place, recent reports have stated that not all City agencies have been going through the necessary steps prior to the suspension of certain city employees. Every supervisor must give each employee his or her due process rights and follow all City rules in relation to suspension and reprimands. This informational hearing will provide a sounding board to open a dialogue, so that every current and future Baltimore City employee, will be treated properly prior to any suspension or reprimand. Hopefully, through conversation, Human Resources can clarify the current policies, be able to properly assess workplace situations, and guarantee that all City Employees are treated with the respect they deserve.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Body requests the Director of Human Resources and all Baltimore City Department and Union Heads to brief the City Council regarding the current suspension practices within Baltimore City agencies, the different types of suspensions available for disciplining employees, the number of city employees suspended from each agency, and the impact that current suspension practices have on the City's workforce.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Director of Human Resources, the President of the AFSCME Local 44, the President of the AFSCME Local 558, the President of the AFSCME Local 2202, the President of the City Union of Baltimore, the President of the Fire Fighters Union, the President of the Fraternal Order of Police, the President of MAPS, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the Council.

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